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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001617

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [AG](#)  
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE IMPLoding

REF: ALGIERS 1115

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas F. Daughton;  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH), the country's best-known independent human rights organization, is in turmoil. Two camps have emerged and are struggling for control, one headed by Hocine Zehouane, LADDH president since 2005, and the other by Ali Yahia Abdenour, the League's founder and now its honorary president. Each side has accused the other of being led astray by leftist political forces. With both sides claiming control over the organization, a cornerstone of Algeria's homegrown civil society stands divided and weakened, a situation the government likely does not find particularly troubling. END SUMMARY

THE ZEHOUANE CAMP  
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¶2. (C) In an October 29 meeting, Hocine Zehouane, president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights since 2005, told poloff that the LADDH's current leadership crisis reflected an ideological split within the organization. Zehouane asserted that his side advocated for greater transparency, a more rational approach to activities, and the development of civil society. He charged that the other side consisted of members who prefer to go on international junkets and meet with foreign embassies. According to Zehouane, the current crisis can be traced to May 2007, when he returned from a trip to Portugal and subsequently discovered that an internal coup had been engineered. He has spent the last five months trying to address internal problems, he said. Zehouane added that some people have suggested that the LADDH has become too closely identified under his leadership with the political left because of his ties to labor unions. He countered that the LADDH works with the unions because the league supports human rights.

¶3. (C) Addressing Ali Yahia Abdenour's involvement in the current crisis and his efforts to oust him, Zehouane said he found Abdenour to be "confused." He stressed that Abdenour's title of honorary president was not mentioned in the LADDH rules and accused Abdenour of acting as if he were still the League's actual president, a post he has held in the past. Zehouane also claimed that contrary to press reports, the October 26 LADDH "extraordinary congress" that he convened was held according to LADDH rules.

14. (C) Zehouane does not believe there was Algerian government involvement in the current crisis. Instead, he believed that the opposition Socialist Forces Front political party (FFS) was behind it. He maintained that the FFS is seeking to increase its own credibility by assuming control of an organization that works on human rights. Zehouane claimed that his wife had discovered that copies of all recent electronic correspondence from the League had been transmitted to the FFS in Switzerland, where FFS party leader Hocine Ait Ahmed resides.

THE ABDENOUR CAMP  
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15. (C) In a November 3 meeting, Ali Yahia Abdenour, LADDH founder and long-time president, told poloff that Zehouane had not followed the League's internal rules when he convened the October 26 "extraordinary congress." Abdenour added that the LADDH's activism on human rights had diminished significantly under Zehouane's leadership and that Zehouane had aligned the League with a "Trotskyite political party" that has minimal support. Abdenour said that Zehouane's actions were designed to shore up his weak support within the organization and confirmed press reports that Zehouane was no longer LADDH president and had been replaced by lawyer Mostefa Bouchachi.

COMMENT  
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16. (C) This showdown within the LADDH has been in the works for months (reftel), and it is still not clear which side will prevail. Zehouane, who has changed the locks at LADDH

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headquarters, appears to believe firmly that he has acted within the powers provided to him by the rules of the organization. He asserts that Abdenour does not have a formal role in the organization and thus should not try to interfere in the organization's decision-making process. Abdenour, who provided a copy of the League's statutes, believes otherwise. Government officials have been publicly silent about the turmoil. While we have seen no evidence of a government role in the current drama, we suspect that the leadership is not upset at seeing the leading independent Algerian human rights organization divided and weak.  
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